

DESCRIPTION OF A NEW SPECIES
OF *POECILMITIS* BUTLER
(LEPIDOPTERA: LYCAENIDAE) FROM THE
S. WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE OF
SOUTH AFRICA

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Abstract. *Poecilmitis henningi* spec. nov. is described and notes on its known habits and distribution are given.

Introduction. Early in 1975 Mr. G. A. Henning while looking over the lycaenid collection in the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, noticed some unusual specimens placed under *Poecilmitis lysander* Pennington. He made a note of the locality where these specimens were caught and in December 1975 Mr. Henning and I visited the locality and captured a further 5 ♂ and 2 ♀. These additional specimens confirmed the suspicion that we were in fact dealing with an undescribed species.

Poecilmitis henningi spec. nov.

Diagnosis. Male: closest to *P. lysander* Pennington, 1962, on the upperside, but differs in having the marginal border broader, the spotting on the forewing larger and the cilia greyish-ochre; it is also smaller and the outer margin of the forewing is more rounded. The underside comes closest to that of *P. beulah* Quickelberge, 1966. *Female:* closest to *P. lysander* on the upperside, but differs in having the spotting larger and the cilia greyish-ochre. The underside as in the male comes closest to *P. beulah*.

Description. ♂ -Holotype. Forewing length: 12.5mm; antenna-wing ratio: 0.5. Body black, clothed with bluish hairs above and pale tawny-yellow ones below. Antennae black above and pale yellowish-white below, with the club dark reddish-brown.

Wings. Upperside. Forewing: orange, with the basal area blue. The basal blue extends up the costa as far as the large black discocellular mark along the inner margin to the postdiscal line. The postdiscal spots are large and the upper three are confluent, while the spots in lb and 3 are more proximad than the others. The black marginal border is broad and of even width. The cilia are greyish-ochre with dark brown at the ends of the veins. Hindwing: orange with the basal area up the median line blue and a strong bluish-violet sheen up to the postdiscal area. There are three faint postdiscal spots in 3, 6 and 7. Subcostally in area 8 the orange ground colour is suffused with black scaling. There is a narrow black marginal border in areas 5-8. The cilia are orange becoming black at the ends of the veins.

Underside. Forewing: orange, with apex, distal area and the inner margin buff-coloured; the black spotting as in other members of the *thysbe*-group. The spots are well developed,

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those towards the costa being centred with shiny-gold. There is a brownish-black submarginal line running from 1b to 3.

Hindwing: pale tawny-ochreous with only a faint indication of darker marks in the median and postdiscal areas.

♂-Paratypes. *Upperside*: the forewing is essentially the same as that of the Holotype but the spotting is larger in some specimens. In the hindwing several specimens differ from the Holotype in having an irregular series of small postdiscal spots, while other specimens have the spots lacking entirely. Subcostally in area 8 the orange ground colour is not suffused with black scaling in some specimens. *Underside*: As in the Holotype.

♀-Allotype. Forewing length: 13.0mm; antenna-wing ratio: 0.49. Body black, clothed with bluish-grey hairs above and pale tawny-yellow ones below. Antennae black above, yellowish-white below with the club dark reddish-brown.

Wings. Upperside. Forewing: orange with the basal greyish-blue extending to the mid-point of the inner margin and along the costa to a point halfway along the cell. There is a large black discocellular spot and a smaller spot at the mid-point of the cell. The six postdiscal spots are large with the upper three confluent. The spots in 2 and 4 are displaced distad with respect to the others. The black marginal border is of even width. The cilia are greyish-ochre becoming slightly darker at the ends of the veins.

Hindwing: orange, with the basal blue extending to the median area. There are six black postdiscal spots with those in 1c and 3 more proximad than the others. The marginal border is widest near the costa, tapering to the anal angle. The cilia are greyish-ochre, becoming slightly darker in the areas at the ends of the veins.

Underside: as in the Holotype but with the tawny-ochreous areas paler.

♀ Paratypes: *Upperside*: as in the Allotype but with one specimen having the black spotting slightly smaller.

Underside: as in the Allotype.

The forewing length varies from 13.0-13.7mm.

Type Material. ♂ -Holotype: SOUTH AFRICA: Huis River Pass, near Calitzdorp, Cape Province, 2.XII.1975 (G.A. Henning).

♀ -Allotype: Idem, (G.A. Henning).

Paratypes: 2 ♂ Idem, (G.A. Henning); 2 ♂ 1 ♀ Idem, (I. Bampton); 1 ♂ 1 ♀ Idem, 30.XI.1957 (K.M. Pennington); 5 ♂ Calitzdorp, Cape Province, 6.X.1967 (K.M. Pennington); 1 ♂ 1 ♀ Idem, 5.XI.1969 (D.A. Swanepoel); 1 ♂ Idem, 3.XI.1969 (D.A. Swanepoel). The holotype and allotype are deposited in the Transvaal Museum, Pretoria, South Africa, paratypes are in the collections of W.H., S.F. & G.A. Henning, the Transvaal Museum and the Durban Museum.

Distribution and Habits. This species was collected by Mr. G.A. Henning and myself on the Huis River Pass above Calitzdorp, Cape Province. It was flying along the steep sides of

a rocky gully running horizontal to the main road in arid country composed of thick Karroo type vegetation. Most specimens were secured when disturbed while feeding on a tiny insignificant flower appearing in the leaf axils of a small shrub, while the odd specimen was seen to settle on the stony ground. Their flight at this time was not very swift but this could perhaps be attributed to the fact that they were intent on feeding and were reluctant to leave the food source after being disturbed. It may have also been due to the windy conditions prevailing at the time. Despite an intensive search of the locality they were observed only in the gully, no specimens being found in the neighbouring areas.

Acknowledgements

I name this species for my friend Graham Henning, and wish to thank his brother Stephen Henning for advice and encouragement in preparing this paper.

References

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THE LARVA OF ONCOCERA FORMOSA (HAWORTH) (LEP.: PYRALIDAE).—This is described by Beirne (*British Pyralid and Plume Moths*, pp. 94-95) as “deep green with the dorsal and subdorsal lines darker and edged greyish-yellowish. The spiracular and subspiracular lines are greenish-white and there is an oval black-centred white spot on each side of the second thoracic segment. The head is deep green, freckled darker”.

At Foulness, Essex, on the 28th of August, 1980, larvae feeding in the manner described for *O. formosa* were common on elm; I took four. Their ground colour, including the head, was rather dark green, harmonising exactly with the elm leaves. The pattern consisted solely of a series of interrupted, fine white lines extending from the head inclusive to the anus. The larvae were seen, but not recognised, by several microlepidopterists. One larvae died at ecdysis; the remainder produced adults from 6-13 June, 1981.

Beirne's account probably came via Meyrick and has the stamp of a careful description made by an entomologist with a larva before him. It seems likely, therefore, that the larva is dimorphic. That two similar species are being confused is possible, but unlikely. It would be useful if collectors who come across larvae of this species would make a note of their coloration.—A. M. EMMET, Labrey Cottage, Victoria Gardens, Saffron Walden, Essex. 15 June 1981.